



*Guide to Protecting Children Playing  
Rugby in Ontario*



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## 1. Introduction

This Guide has been produced in recognition of the growing number of children that are playing rugby in Ontario and the paramount importance of ensuring that they can do so in a safe and welcoming environment. It is a reference document that complements the policy statements and incident handling procedures specified in sections 3.14 and 7.9 of the [Rugby Ontario Operations Manual](#).

The Guide's primary aims are to provide rugby organizations and all participants (i.e. players, coaches, organizers and volunteers) with:

- A good understanding of the multi-faceted characteristics of child abuse and how it may occur in rugby; and
- practical suggestions for achieving an incident-free and rewarding environment.

## 2. What is Child Abuse?

**2.1 Child Abuse** refers to any form of physical, psychological, social, emotional or sexual maltreatment of a child whereby the survival, safety, self-esteem, growth and development of that child are endangered. This includes placing a child at risk through something a person has done or is failing to do. Child abuse generally falls into five categories:

- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
- Bullying

These categories are not mutually exclusive. A child experiencing physical abuse is undoubtedly experiencing emotional abuse as well. Bullying encompasses the other four categories. Although the physical and behavioural signs listed below for each category may be symptomatic of abuse, they may not always be an indicator; conversely, children experiencing abuse may not demonstrate any of these signs. Child abuse is often difficult to recognize.

**2.2 Emotional Abuse** may be defined as a failure to provide for a child's basic emotional needs. Persistent patterns of demeaning or threatening a child, whether intentional or not, can be invisible or gradual and have serious effects on behavior and development by:

- Making a child feel worthless or unloved, inadequate or not valued;
- Imposing inappropriate expectations for a child's age or stage of development;
- Causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger.

Emotional abuse in rugby may occur when children are subjected to:

- A persistent lack of respect through being continually ignored, given the 'silent treatment' or being subjected to name-calling and swearing;
- Constant blame or humiliation by being told that they are stupid or 'slow' (which may be accompanied by persistent and demeaning correction);
- Continual aggressiveness (which makes them feel frightened);
- Praise being withheld or used as a control device.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about emotional abuse in a rugby context include:

- low self-esteem
- significant decline in concentration
- running away
- indiscriminate friendliness and neediness
- extremes of passivity or aggression
- self-harm or mutilation

**2.3 Physical Abuse** may be defined as an actual or attempted physical injury to a child, including the administration of toxic substances, where there is knowledge or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was knowingly inflicted or not prevented. It involves deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured.

It is important to distinguish between accidental cuts and bruises on parts of the body like elbows, shins and knees which are sustained not just in contact sports such as rugby but also throughout childhood, and physical abuse in rugby which may occur when children incur bodily harm due to:

- deliberately hitting, shaking or throwing;
- the nature and intensity of training or competition exceeding the capacity of a child's immature and growing body;
- over-playing an athlete;
- failure to do a risk assessment of physical limits (which are not necessarily linked to age) or pre-existing medical conditions (e.g. skin disorders, bone diseases);
- knowingly failing to take action to avoid unsafe situations;
- administering, condoning, or failure to intervene in drug use; or
- administering drugs to enhance performance.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about physical abuse in a rugby context include:

- refusal to discuss injuries
- aggression towards others
- improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- running away
- untreated injuries

- excessive physical punishment
- avoiding activities due to injuries or possibility of injuries being discovered
- unexplained injuries, particularly if recurrent or on parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely [e.g. on the cheeks or thighs].

**2.4 Neglect** is a form of abuse manifested through ignoring or discrediting a child's emotional and physical needs including food and water, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth. Failure to meet these essential needs may impair the physical or emotional health and development of a child. Physical or emotional neglect in rugby may occur when there is:

- a lack of encouragement, praise, or direct listening to a child - it leaves no scars but can be emotionally devastating, leading to feelings of abandonment, confusion, low self-esteem and delayed emotional development;
- exposure to extreme weather conditions;
- failure to seek medical attention for injuries;
- use of unsafe equipment;
- exposure to a hazardous environment without a proper risk assessment of the activity;
- failure to provide adequate water and water breaks;
- failure to properly supervise activities.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about neglect in a rugby context include:

- constant hunger/thirst
- poor personal hygiene and/or poor state of clothing
- constant tiredness
- frequent lateness or unexplained non-attendance at practices or games
- untreated medical problems
- low self-esteem
- poor peer relationships
- stealing

**2.5 Sexual Abuse** is manipulating or forcing a child to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of or consents to what is happening. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact or non-contact acts such as forcing children to look at, or be involved in, the production of pornographic material, to watch sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in a sexually inappropriate manner. Sexual abuse in rugby may occur when there is:

- exposure to sexually explicit inappropriate language, jokes or pornographic material;
- inappropriate touching or other forms of physical contact (e.g. during coaching sessions);
- sexual intercourse and/or sexual activity with a child as defined by law in Ontario.

Sexual abuse can be difficult to identify because it often happens away from others and those who experience it often do not tell anyone. In some cases, there may be no physical or behavioural signs to suggest that a child has been sexually abused. Signs which **may** raise concerns about sexual abuse in a rugby context include:

- lack of trust in adults
- over-familiarity with adults
- fear of a particular adult, or fear of an adult with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- third party expressions of concern about possible sexual abuse of a child
- social isolation – being withdrawn or introverted and poor peer relationships
- reluctance or refusal to participate in physical activity or to change clothes for games
- displays of sexual knowledge beyond the child's age
- description by a child of what appears to be an act of a sexual nature involving him/her

**2.6 Bullying** has become a significant issue for children and parents. It may be defined as 'repeated, systematic, and aggressive verbal, psychological or physical conduct by an individual or group against a child'. It is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Bullying can be difficult to identify because it often happens away from others and those who are bullied often do not tell anyone. Although anyone can be the target of bullying, children who are typically shy, sensitive, anxious or insecure are often the victims. Sometimes they may be singled out for physical reasons – being overweight, physically small, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture. Bullying in rugby may occur when a child is exposed to:

- a parent who pushes too hard;
- a coach who adopts a 'win-at-all-costs' philosophy;
- another player who intimidates inappropriately;
- a club official who places unfair pressure on a child;
- a spectator who shouts abuse;
- theft, hitting, kicking - in some cases, this may constitute a criminal offense;
- racist or homophobic taunts; threats; graffiti; gestures; unfounded rumors; teasing; name-calling; and racist, religious, ethnic or cultural slurs or defamatory remarks;
- being tormented, ridiculed, humiliated, ignored, isolated during a group activity or discouraged from social acceptance by teammates/peer group;
- unwanted physical contact or abusive/suggestive comments.

Signs which **may** raise concerns about bullying in a rugby context include:

- reduced concentration or becoming withdrawn
- hesitation or reluctance to attend training sessions or games

- often being the last one picked for a team or group activity for no apparent reason
- being picked on by teammates when they think your back is turned
- reluctance to go to certain places or work with a certain individual
- missing or damaged clothing or personal possessions
- unexplainable bruising or other injuries
- 'losing' pocket money repeatedly
- becoming nervous and withdrawn
- suddenly prone to lashing out at people, either physically or verbally, when normally quiet

### **3. Recruitment and Selection of Individuals Involved with Children Playing Rugby**

**3.1 Policy Requirement:** Rugby Ontario requires its Members to:

- carefully screen and select those individuals whose role places them in positions of authority or regular supervisory capacity with children; and
- have suitable measures in place to ensure that all volunteers and others not registered with Rugby Canada are suitable for working with children.

**3.2 Position Descriptions:** To achieve this policy aim, it is strongly recommended that a position description be prepared for every position involving interaction with children. These descriptions should encompass not only the standard, formal positions of coaches, assistant coaches, therapists and team managers but also those less formal ones (e.g. water carriers, assistant team managers) which are often undertaken by volunteers who may or may not be club members). As a minimum, each description should include the following:

- The aims of the program/activity in which children are participants;
- Its roles and responsibilities as they relate to interactions with children;
- The level of experience or qualifications required (e.g. coaching certification);
- Details of Rugby Ontario's Child Protection Policy;
- The mandatory requirement for a valid Police Record Check (Vulnerable Sector Screening);
- The mandatory requirement to sign Rugby Ontario's Code of Conduct.

**3.3 Candidate Interviews:** It is strongly recommended that Members interview every individual wishing to assume one of these positions. It should be carried out according to acceptable interview protocols:

- Have at least two members of the Club Executive conduct an interview;
- Verify all required qualifications;
- Ask a standard set of information-gathering questions of each candidate;
- Avoid questions that allow for simple 'Yes' or 'No' answers.

Appendix 1 provides a sample set of questions and the type of answers that interviewers might look for in a good candidate.

## 4. Responsibilities of Child Protection Officers (CPO's)

**4.1 Policy Requirement:** Rugby Ontario requires any Member running age-grade programs to appoint a Child Protection Officer (CPO).

**4.2 Position Description:** To assist clubs in establishing a CPO position, a standard position description has been included in this Guide as Appendix 2.

**4.3 Candidate Interviews:** It is strongly recommended that clubs follow the same selection process to that described above for individuals involved with children playing rugby.

**4.4 Relationship with the Provincial Child Protection Officer:** Rugby Ontario has established the position of Provincial Child Protection Officer which reports to the Chief Executive Officer. One responsibility of this position is to maintain open lines of communication with CPOs in terms of:

- advising on how to handle incidents or concerns;
- keeping them current on information relevant to their position; and
- providing training opportunities and/or materials to share with club members.

**4.5 Incident Handling Procedures:** These are documented in section 7.9 of the [Rugby Ontario Operations Manual](#).

**4.6 Relationship to Club Executives:** It should be understood by all club members and volunteers that the CPO is expected to provide feedback to the club executive on any training needs or concerns about poor practices. In turn, the club executive is expected to be supportive of the CPO and responsive to any feedback and recommendations received.

## 5. Responding to Concerns or Disclosures about Abusive Behaviour

**5.1 General Approach:** Concerns about children being exposed to abusive behavior generally arise in one of three ways:

- The child independently makes a disclosure to a parent or other trusted adult;
- Based on signs observed by a parent or other trusted adult, the child makes a disclosure;

- No disclosure is made but the person strongly suspects abuse based on observing changes in the child's behavior.

As it takes considerable courage for a child to disclose exposure to abusive behavior, such disclosures need to be handled very carefully and sensitively to avoid causing further distress to the child. As false allegations are very rare, if a child discloses being abused or information is obtained which gives reason to believe that a child is being abused, it is imperative that the person receiving the disclosure or information immediately:

- Ensures that the child receives appropriate help and support including removal from the alleged abuser and assurance that an appropriate course of action will ensue;
- If not the child's parent, informs the parents of the disclosure and intent to notify the Club's CPO;
- Informs the appropriate CPO of the disclosure but otherwise keeps the disclosure confidential unless requested to inform a third party;
- If the CPO is unavailable or an immediate response is required, consults the police and social work services/Children's Aid Society for advice (as these organizations have a statutory responsibility for the protection of children and may already hold other concerning information about the child).

Based on the information received, the CPO will make an Initial Assessment in accordance with the procedures specified in section 7.9 of the [Rugby Ontario Operations Manual](#).

**5.2 Reluctance to Report Concerns or Disclosures:** Adults are sometimes reluctant to report concerns or disclosures for fear that the alleged abuser will sue them for defamation if the allegation is unfounded. To be defamatory, a statement must be untrue. Even if subsequently shown to be untrue, the statement will be protected by 'qualified privilege' provided that it is made to the appropriate authority in response to a duty, whether legal, moral or social or in the protection of an interest. However, unjustified repetition of allegations to third parties or statements made by malice even to the appropriate authority will not be protected by privilege. In such circumstances, an action of defamation could be successful.

### **5.3 Good Response Practices:**

- React calmly, so as not to frighten the child.
- Listen and take what the child says seriously. Do not show skepticism.
- Provide reassurance that the child is not to blame and was right to tell someone.
- Be aware of interpreting what the child says, especially if there are learning or physical disabilities which affect communication or English is not the first language.

- Do not assume that the experience was bad or painful - it may have been neutral or even pleasurable.
- Avoid projecting your own reactions onto the child.
- Avoid asking any questions. If necessary, only ask enough questions to gain basic information to establish the **possibility** that abuse may have occurred. Only use open-ended, non-leading questions such as Who? Where? When?
- Do not introduce personal information from either your own experiences or those of other children.

#### **5.4 Practices to Avoid:**

- Panicking.
- Showing shock or distaste.
- Probing for more information than is offered.
- Speculating or making assumptions.
- Making negative comments about the subject of the disclosure or concern.
- Approaching the subject of the disclosure or concern.
- Making promises, agreeing to keep secrets or giving a guarantee of confidentiality.
- Sharing concerns with a parent who may be responsible for, or have knowledge of the abuse as this may place the child at further risk.

**5.5 Recording the Concern or Disclosure:** Make a written record of the information as soon as possible using the [Rugby Ontario Child Protection Incident Report Form](#), completing as much of the form as possible including:

- The child's name, age, date of birth, home address and telephone number;
- Any times, dates or other relevant information concerning the incident;
- Whether the concern being expressed is that of the person making the report or another person;
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what happened and how any injuries occurred **using the child's own words**;
- The nature of the concern (include all of the information obtained during the initial account e.g. time, date, location);
- A description of any visible (when normally dressed) injuries or bruising, behavioral signs, indirect signs (but do not physically examine the child);
- Details of any witnesses;
- Whether or not the child's parents have been informed;
- Details of anyone else who has been consulted and the information obtained;
- If it is not the child making the report, note whether the child has been spoken to and, if so, what was said **using the child's own words**; and
- The child's views on the situation.

Sign and date the report and send to the CPO as soon as possible. If the form can be completed electronically, print a copy, sign and date and then delete immediately - do

not save copies to the hard drive or a memory stick where they may be accessed by others.

## 6. Guidelines for Individuals Involved with Children Playing Rugby

**6.1 General:** As children's rugby takes place in many different locations, environments and formats, it is impossible to provide specific guidance on many of the issues covered. Ultimately, most situations require judgment about what is practicable and reasonable in the circumstances. The following guidelines, which are based on generally recognized common sense and practicality, serve several useful functions:

- set out for adults what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable;
- set out for children and their parents the standards of practice which they and the organization should expect from those who work/volunteer with children;
- define standards of practice expected from those to whom it applies;
- form the basis for challenging and improving practices;
- help to safeguard club members and volunteers by encouraging them to adhere to agreed standards of practice.

### 6.2 Good practices:

- Make rugby fun, enjoyable and promote fair play.
- Treat all children equally, respectfully, fairly and with dignity.
- Involve parents wherever possible.
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust and, where practical, include children in the decision-making process.
- Always work in an open environment.
- Put the welfare of each child first before winning or achieving performance goals.
- Be an excellent role model by dressing appropriately and not smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs in the company of children.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback.
- Recognize the developmental needs and capacity of children in training and competitions.

### 6.3 Practices to be avoided:

- Having 'favorites' – this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other children and could be misinterpreted by others.
- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking children alone on car trips, however short.
- Being a party to private or unobserved situations.
- Entering children's bedrooms on trips away from home, unless in an emergency situation or in the interest of health and safety. If it is necessary to enter rooms,

alert the occupants by knocking and announcing your intention to enter. The door should remain open, if appropriate.

- Doing things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Pushing children against their will and putting undue pressure on them in training and competitions.
- Providing negative criticism.
- Placing children under the age of 16 years in positions of responsibility in relation to other children.
- Taking on responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

#### **6.4 Practices that are NEVER condoned:**

- Engaging in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Engaging in rough or physical contact except as permitted within the rules of the game or competition.
- Forming intimate emotional, physical or sexual relationships with children.
- Allowing or engaging in touching a child in a sexually suggestive manner.
- Allowing children to swear or use sexualized language unchallenged.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Inviting or allowing children to stay with you at your home.
- Coaches and other leaders sharing a room alone with a child for sleeping accommodation.

**6.5 Recommended Adult-To-Child Ratios in Children’s Rugby:** In general practice, the average ratio of adult-to-child should be:

Age Range	Ratio Adults : Children
5 yrs old & over	1 : 8
8 yrs old & over	1 : 10

All activities should be planned to involve a minimum of two adults, preferably one male and one female. The following factors should be considered when deciding how many adults are required to safely supervise children:

- The number of children involved in the activity.
- The age, maturity and experience of the children.
- Whether any of the coaches or children has a learning or physical disability or special needs and requirements
- Whether any of the children have challenging behaviour.
- The particular hazards associated with the activity and the environment.
- The level of qualification and experience of the coaches.

- The characteristics of the program of activities.

**6.6 Physical Contact with Players:** All forms of physical contact should respect and be sensitive to the needs and wishes of the child and should take place in a manner of dignity and respect. Parents and children should be made aware of the situations in which contact of a physical nature (especially in coaching) may happen when they join the club. Children should be encouraged to express their views on physical contact.

Coaching instruction should be clearly explained with a description of how it is proposed to handle or have contact with the child before doing so. This should be accompanied by checking if the child is comfortable. Manual support should be provided openly and must always be proportionate to the circumstances.

If it is necessary to help a child with personal tasks e.g. toileting or changing, the child and parents should be encouraged to express a preference regarding the support and should be encouraged to speak out about methods of support with which they are uncomfortable. Club members and volunteers should work with parents and children to develop practiced routines regarding their personal care so that parents and children know what to expect.

**6.7 First Aid and the treatment of injuries:** All coaches/managers/administrators and volunteers must ensure that:

- There is an accessible and well-stocked first aid kit at the venue at all times.
- There is access to a cell phone or telephone.
- There is awareness of any pre-existing medical conditions, medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries and treatment required.
- Only those with a current, recognized first aid qualification treat injuries.
- In more serious cases, assistance is obtained from a medically qualified professional as soon as possible.
- A [Rugby Ontario Serious Injury Notification Report Form](#) is completed if a child sustains a significant injury along with the details of any treatment given.
- Where possible, access to medical advice and / or assistance is available.
- A child's parents are informed of any injury and action taken as soon as possible.
- The circumstances in which any accidents occur are reviewed to avoid future repetitions.

**6.8 Photography and video guidelines:** The aim of these guidelines is to not to prevent bona fide persons from recording activities for performance development reasons or achievements. They aspire to ensure that children are protected from the manipulation of photographs and video footage in a way that harms children or places them at risk of harm. Some rugby fixtures take place where club members and volunteers have little or no control over the environment (e.g. training/playing fields in areas to which the public have general rights of access). In these circumstances, club members and volunteers

should take all reasonable steps to promote the safe use of photography and video to respond to any concerns raised. Although Rugby Ontario has no power to prevent individuals from photographing or making video footage in public places, it reserves the right to prohibit the use of photography or video equipment at any event or activity with which it is associated. The following guidelines cover recording activities by Rugby Ontario and its member clubs:

- Parents and children should be notified of the intent to take photographs or use video equipment at a rugby activity along with the reason for doing so (e.g. promotional purposes).
- Parents should be offered the opportunity to withhold their permission. In the absence of any expressed objection, parental agreement will be assumed.
- Where appropriate, children should be asked their views. If a child is able to provide an informed view, this must be taken into consideration.
- Recognizing that the best interests of the child are paramount, every reasonable effort should be made to give effect to the individual wishes of parents and children.
- Materials promoting events should state where photography and use of video is to take place.
- Those who have sought and obtained permission to photograph or use video equipment should be formally identifiable.
- Information about what to do if there are concerns should be available.
- Registration of intention to photograph or use video equipment should be required on the day of the activity.
- No photography or use of video equipment is allowable when there is unsupervised access to children or one-to-one sessions unless this has been explicitly agreed with the child and parent.
- No photography or use of video equipment is allowable in changing areas.
- All negatives, copies of videos and digital photograph files in the possession of Rugby Ontario or its member clubs are to be stored in a secure place. They should not be kept for any longer than is necessary having regard to the purposes for which they were taken.
- Images are not to be shared with external agencies unless express permission is obtained from the child and parent.
- Any person behaving in a way which could reasonably be construed as inappropriate in relation to the photography or use of video equipment should be reported to the person in charge on the event/activity and approached for an explanation. If a satisfactory explanation is not provided, the circumstances should be reported to the relevant CPO and, where appropriate, to the police.

**6.9 Internet/Social Media Publishing Guidelines:** Good practices for internet publishing include:

- Obtaining written consent from the child’s parents before publishing any information about a child. If the material is changed from the time of consent, the parents must be informed and consent provided for the changes.
- Taking special care in relation to vulnerable children (e.g. child fleeing domestic violence or a child with a disability), by considering whether publication could place the child at risk.
- Ensuring that athletes who have a public profile as a result of their achievements are entitled to the same protection as all other children. In these cases, common sense is required with decisions reflecting the best interests of the child.
- Ensuring that information posted on RO and member club websites/social media never includes personal information that could identify a child (e.g. home address, e-mail address, telephone number).
- Directing all contact to Rugby Ontario or the appropriate member club.
- Restricting credit for achievements to a child’s name.
- Never portraying children in a demeaning, tasteless or a provocative manner (e.g. in a state of partial undress, other than when depicting an action shot within the context of the sport - attire such as tracksuits or t-shirts may be more appropriate).
- Restricting the distribution of information about specific events or meetings (e.g. coaching sessions) to those directly involved.
- Reporting any concerns or enquiries about publications or the internet/social media to the appropriate CPO.

**6.10 Cell Phones:** Text messaging is a quick and easy way to communicate with others and is a popular and often preferred means of communication with children. Club members and volunteers must be aware that intimidating, bullying or even abusive messages can be discreetly sent by text. Information sent in this way, even where well-meaning, could be misinterpreted. Good practices for text messaging include:

- Club members / volunteers considering whether it is necessary and appropriate to hold the cell phone numbers of children. The general principle is that all communications with children should be open, transparent and appropriate to the nature of the relationship.
- Making contact at the phone number that the parent has provided on the child’s behalf.
- Agreeing with children and parents what kind of information should be communicated directly to children either via cell phone (e.g. “need to know” information such as the last minute cancellation of a training session).
- Carefully storing the cell phone numbers of children and providing access only to those who need access for a legitimate reason

- Never engaging in personal or sensitive communications with children via text message
- Reporting all concerns about the inappropriate use of text messaging to the appropriate CPO.

There have already been a number of cases where children have been placed at risk as a result of the ability to discreetly record and transmit images through cell phones. The use of cell phones in this way can be very difficult to monitor. The guidelines for the use of photographs and videos (refer to section 6.9 above) should be observed in relation to the use of cell phones as cameras / videos. Particular care is required to prevent photographs or video footage occurring in areas where personal privacy is important (e.g. changing rooms, bathrooms and sleeping quarters). All concerns about the inappropriate use of cell phones to record photographs or video footage should be reported to the appropriate CPO and, if necessary, to the police.

## 7. Managing Challenging Behaviours

**7.1 General:** Coaches/Managers/Administrators/Officials and Volunteers who deliver activities to children may, from time to time, have to deal with a child's challenging behaviour. In such cases, they should not attempt to respond by using techniques for which they have not been trained. The following guidelines identify (a) strategies and deterrents which can be used to encourage a proactive response to supporting children in managing their own behavior; and (b) unacceptable sanctions or interventions.

**7.2 Planning Activities:** Coaches should consider whether any members of the group have previously presented, or are likely to present, any difficulties in relation to the activities involved, other participants or the rugby environment. In such instances, strategies to manage any perceived difficulties should be agreed in advance of the activity including the appropriate number of adults required to safely manage and support the activity by responding to any challenging behaviour and safeguarding other members of the group and the staff / volunteers involved.

**7.3 Agreeing on acceptable and unacceptable behaviours:** Coaches, managers, administrators, officials, volunteers, children and parents should be involved in developing an agreed statement of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and the range of sanctions which may be applied in response to unacceptable behaviour. If and when such a list is compiled, every member of the group can be asked to sign it.

**7.4 Dealing with unacceptable behaviours:** In dealing with children who display risk-taking or challenging behaviours, coaches/managers/administrators, and volunteers may consider the following options:

- Time out - from the activity, group or individual work;

- Reparation - the act or process of making amends;
- Restitution - the act of giving something back;
- Behavioural reinforcement - rewards for good behaviour, consequences for negative behavior;
- De-escalation - talking through the situation with the child;
- Increased supervision;
- Individual 'contracts' - as a condition of continued participation;
- Sanctions or consequences - missing an outing.

Adults and children must not use the following measures to manage behaviour:

- Physical punishment or the threat of such;
- The withdrawal of communication from the child;
- Depriving access to food, water, changing facilities or toilets;
- Verbal intimidation, ridicule or humiliation.

Organizers and volunteers should review the needs of any child for whom deterrents are frequently necessary. This review should involve the child and the parents to ensure an informed decision is made about the child's continued participation in the group or activity. Ultimately, if a child continues to present a high level of risk or danger to himself/ herself or others, it may be reluctantly necessary to bar that child from further participation.

**7.5 Physical interventions:** The use of physical interventions should always be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary in order to prevent a child from injuring themselves, injuring others or causing serious damage to property. All forms of physical intervention should form part of a broader approach to the management of challenging behavior, one based on conscious decision-making and not a reaction. Before physically intervening, a person should ask "Is this my only option in order to manage the situation and ensure safety?" and be aware of the following considerations:

- Avoiding contact with buttocks, genitals and breasts.
- Achieving an outcome that is in the best interests of the child whose behaviour is of immediate concern.
- The circumstances, the risks associated with employing physical intervention compared with the risks of not employing physical intervention.
- The proportionality of the scale and nature of physical intervention to the behaviour of the child and the nature of harm / damage it might cause.
- For any form of physical intervention, applying only the minimum force needed to avert injury to a person or serious damage to property for the shortest period of time.
- Rejecting physical interventions which are deemed to present an unreasonable risk to children or others.
- Rejecting physical intervention as a form of punishment.

Any physical intervention should be recorded as soon as possible after the incident by the organizers/volunteers involved and, if possible, passed to the CPO. There should also be a timely debriefing for the child and parents in a calm and safe environment.

## 8. Managing Transportation and Overnight Stays

**8.1 Transportation responsibilities:** Parents who arrange transportation for their children to and from an activity without the knowledge of Rugby Ontario or its member Clubs are responsible for satisfying themselves about the appropriateness and safety of the arrangements. If Rugby Ontario arranges to transport children, then the club members and volunteers involved are responsible for ensuring that:

- Vehicles are correctly insured.
- Drivers have a valid and appropriate license for the vehicles being used.
- All reasonable safety measures are available (e.g. fitted, working seatbelts).
- There is an appropriate ratio of adults per child.
- The schedule allows drivers to have adequate breaks and rest stops.
- Where possible, children are placed in back seats with seat belts worn.
- Where possible, written parental consent for the transportation is obtained.
- There is an agreed pick-up policy with parents which will include a clear and shared understanding of arrangements for pickup at the end of the activity including a call ahead to notify parents of expected arrival time.
- Another club member is aware of the transportation arrangements and has details of the route and the anticipated length of the journey.
- Where possible, have another adult accompany the driver.

**8.2 Trip planning:** Those in charge of the group will be responsible for the safety and well being of children in their care. Good trip planning practices include:

- Identifying potential areas of risk and safeguards for managing them;
- Designating one of the group leaders to co-ordinate the agreed-on arrangements;
- Recognizing that risk assessment should be an on-going process throughout the trip as groups can often find themselves in unexpected situations.

**8.3 Parental Involvement:** Where possible, a meeting should be held with parents before departure to:

- Share information about the trip.
- Answer their questions and make joint decisions about arrangements where appropriate.
- Agree on behaviour and conduct guidelines along with sanctions for unacceptable behavior.
- Obtain emergency contact details from parents.

In the event of an emergency at home during the trip, parents should be encouraged to make contact with the group leaders so that arrangements can be put in place to support the child on hearing any distressing news.

**8.4 Accommodation facilities:** Organizers should find out as much as possible about the accommodation and the surroundings at the planning stage. Where possible, an initial visit to the venue/accommodation should take place to help those organizing the trip identify all practical issues and allow time to address them in advance, in consultation with children and parents where appropriate. These include:

- Central and remote locations both present different challenges.
- Sleeping arrangements should enable suitable sharing in terms of age and gender and appropriately located club member/volunteer bedrooms for both supervision and ease of access in case of emergency.
- Number and gender of adults present especially for dormitory sleeping arrangements where leaders may be required to share with children.
- Appropriate safeguards where others have access to the sleeping quarters.
- Special access or adaptive aids required by group leaders, children or volunteers.
- Environmental factors.
- Personal safety issues including who children should speak to if they have any worries or concerns during this time.

**8.5 Travel arrangements:** Organizers must determine the need for adequate travel and medical insurance cover. If the trip involves out-of-country travel, organizers should be aware of local procedures for dealing with concerns about the welfare of children and familiar with the details of the emergency services, including hospitals.

**8.6 Exchange Visits / Hosting:** Before departure, organizers should ensure there is a shared understanding of the standards expected during home stays between them, the host organization or families, and the parents and their children. These standards should include:

- Arrangements for the supervision of children during the visit.
- Checking host family references by the hosting club.
- Provision of emergency contact numbers to organizers, parents and children.
- Children knowing whom they should talk to if problems arise during the visit.
- Daily contact with all children to ensure they are safe and well.

**8.7 Accommodation at a Facility:** Organizers should ensure that:

- The facility is appropriately licensed and has adequate and relevant insurance cover in place.
- Adequate security arrangements are in place and accommodation facility employees have been screened (where appropriate).
- Staff who are involved in the training or instruction of children (e.g. in swimming pools) are appropriately qualified and trained.

- There is adequate supervision of the group for the duration of the stay, particularly when the facility is being shared with other groups.

**8.8 During the Trip:** Organizers should ensure that:

- Arrangements are in place for the supervision and risk assessment of activities during free time.
- Children are not allowed to wander alone in unfamiliar places.
- Group leaders have clear roles and responsibilities for the duration of the trip.
- Group leaders are not over-familiar or fraternize with children and remember that they are in a position of trust at all times.
- The use of alcohol and drugs or engaging in sexual relationships is not condoned.
- Children are encouraged to communicate either overtly or discreetly both positive and negative aspects of the trip that they want to be known.

**8.9 After the Trip:** Where appropriate, a de-briefing should take place with all those involved in the trip, including children. This will provide an opportunity to reflect on what went well, not so well and what could have been done differently. Feedback will be used to inform future trips.

## **9. FAQs on Police Record Checks (Vulnerable Sector Screening)**

### **9.1 Who requires a Police Record Check (PRC)?**

Rugby Ontario require **all persons** who work on a professional or volunteer basis in positions that involve regular supervisory contact or positions of authority with children in a rugby environment to submit an approved PRC for vulnerable sector screening.

### **9.2 How can you obtain a PRC?**

A PRC can be undertaken through attending your local Police Service (where you live, not where you work). There may be a charge for this service and the length of time to get the PRC could be up to eight weeks. The price of this service varies depending on the area in which you live. A local Police Service may also require a supporting letter from the club as part for the process to apply for a PRC.

### **9.3 What happens to a PRC after the background check has been completed?**

The results of the check will be provided by the Police Service to the individual undertaking the check. That person must then provide a copy of the completed check to the Child Protection Officer or other official designated by their club or other rugby organization where it will be kept on confidential record. Rugby Ontario has the right to request a copy of this approval, if deemed necessary.



**9.4 Are there any persons who are 'exempted' from a PRC?**

There are no exemptions from completing a PRC. However, an individual may provide Rugby Ontario or their club with a PRC that has been completed through another organization.

**9.5 What happens if a person does not wish to complete a PRC or does not want to provide a copy of a PRC obtained?**

In accordance with our Child Protection Policy and Procedures, that person will not be allowed to work or volunteer in any position that directly involves working with children within Rugby Ontario and its member clubs and organizations.

## Appendix 1

### Sample Set of Questions and Expected Answers for Interviewers

Question:	Answer should demonstrate:
Can you tell us why you want to take on the post of [insert]?	<i>A commitment to helping young people enjoy the sport safely and to share knowledge and experience</i>
Can you tell us about your experience of caring for, working with, or coaching children and young people?	<i>Experiences as a parent, employment or voluntary work.</i>
<b><i>Interviewers must also assess what level of direct, unsupervised contact was involved.</i></b>	
What do you think are the attributes/skills required in a good coach/team manager of children and young people?	<i>An understanding of issues that affect children.</i>
<i>Communication skills</i>	<i>The importance of promoting enjoyment, not just achievement. Promoting healthy competitiveness. Being sensitive to the ability of children. Encouragement, not criticism</i>
Can you give us examples of where and how you have used some of those skills?	<i>Experience at work (perhaps working with adults, but the skills should be evident) or in voluntary work.</i>
Can you think of an example where you have been critical towards a child? How could you have handled it differently?	<i>Positively demonstrating or explaining how child could have acted/behaved.</i>
If we approached people who know you well, what would they say were your strengths so far as this post/role is concerned?	<i>Patience. Supportive. Encouraging attitude, etc.</i>
If a child approaches you to say they're being bullied by others in the team, how will you handle this?	<i>Interviewers should refer to the relevant section in the procedures and compare applicant's response.</i>
How will you gain the respect and trust of children and young people? Can you give any examples?	<i>Being fair, consistent, not having favorites, being clear in what I say and do, Being honest, positive,. Listening, Respect</i>
Can you give us an example of where you have seen or heard someone treating a child inappropriately (verbally or physically) (at sports match, in the home, in the street)? What was the adult doing wrong?	<i>Venting their frustration. Failing to understand the child's perspective. Failing to recognize that they are an adult and dealing with a child (using adult orientated language etc).</i>
Imagine you've had a rotten day at work. Now, this evening, you have a coaching session. You're feeling very irritable and could take this out on the young people. What do you do about that?	<i>Asking another adult to assist at the session. Being aware that that was work, this is now port. Focusing on the session and the young people.</i>
A young child is lingering in the showers after a game. He says he can't dry himself properly and asks you to do it. What do you do?	<i>Interviewers should refer to Code of Conduct and compare applicant's response. Ask child why. Get another adult to view (unobtrusively) actions.</i>
Can you tell us what has given you greatest pleasure with your own children (or children of relatives/friends etc)?	<i>Seeing them happy. Seeing them succeed. Seeing them participate in ..... Helping them solve problems/acquire new skills</i>
Will you undertake training sessions for coaches?	<i>If the answer is 'No' then you do not have a successful candidate.</i>
Will you undertake to read and abide by Rugby Ontario's Child Protection Policy and Procedures	<i>If the answer is 'No' then you do not have a successful candidate.</i>

## Appendix 2

### Standard Position Description for Child Protection Officers

#### Responsibilities:

- Assume a leadership role in the development, application, promotion and review of the RO Child Protection Policy and procedures on a rugby club, and will report to the Branch or Rugby Ontario, Child Protection Officer, as and when required;
- Participate on branch or provincial Child Protection Disciplinary Panels, ensuring prompt, confidential and fair processes for the evaluation and monitoring of decisions that are taken;
- Act as the official Rugby Ontario contact for his/her club members, volunteers, parents, and children regarding all matters pertaining to the protection of children and youth within the branch union;
- Act in cooperation with the Branch or RO CPO as the official Rugby Ontario contact with local statutory agencies and coordinate the maintenance of records of reported cases, actions taken, ensuring prompt access to all necessary information;
- Keep current on developments and communicate with club members information on data protection, confidentiality and other legal issues that impact on the protection of children;
- Organize in cooperation with Branch or RO CPO, training courses in cooperation with club, his/her club membership with regards to child protection and safety [i.e. 'speak out' sessions, guest speakers, printed/website info, etc;]
- Have a child-focused approach and be perceived as being approachable, fair minded and impartial;
- Regularly (at least on a 3-year basis) monitor and review the Rugby Ontario Child Protection Policy and procedures as they apply to the club ensure there are mechanisms in place for active monitoring and evaluation for the purposes of the RO CPP, including verification of valid police records checks for those defined under the Rugby Ontario, Child Protection Policy.
- Hold a current, valid police records check for volunteering with children and youth

#### Knowledge and Core Competencies:

- Ideally, a Child Protection Officer will have a background in working with children, such as teachers, social workers, child health workers, police services, etc. However, candidates do not need to be a child protection 'expert'. [That is the role and responsibility of statutory agencies such as Police Services and Social Work Agencies];

#### They should however demonstrate:

- A basic knowledge of legislation, government guidance and the Rugby Canada national framework for child protection;
- A basic knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of statutory agencies
- A knowledge of managing child protection and reporting procedures;
- A knowledge of behavior that is harmful to children – poor practices and abuse;
- An understanding of the core values and principles that support good practices;
- An awareness of equity issues in relation to child protection;
- Basic knowledge of how abusers 'target' and 'groom' organizations to abuse children, and to respond through developing best practices directed towards the prevention of these threats;
- Ability to advance and promote all areas of the RO, Child Protection Policy, and Code of Conduct and Ethics.